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E C O

MSC | Management
of Protected Areas

M.Sc. Programme
"Management of Protected Areas"

Potentials and Challenges of Alatish and Dinder National Parks (Ethiopia, Sudan) for implementing Transboundary Park Cooperation

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Klagenfurt, April 2011

Citation: Hailu M. (2011): Potentials and challenges of Alatish and Dinder National Parks (Ethiopia, Sudan) for Implementing Transboundary Park cooperation. Master Thesis, Management of Protected Area's Program, University of Klagenfurt, Austria.

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1 SUMMARY

International borders are political not ecological boundaries. That is why natural resources do not end at administrative borders. As a consequence conservation measures have to be taken across national borders. International organizations such as IUCN strongly recommend the establishment of transboundary protected areas. In addition to their function as a tool to make peace between neighboring countries/regions, transboundary protected areas also help sustainable biodiversity conservation through creating wider ecosystem and avoiding dissection due to political boundaries.

Dinder and Alatish national parks are adjoining national parks that are found in two different sovereign countries Sudan and Ethiopia respectively. The two national parks share about 75 km common border exhibiting common ecosystem. Dinder National Park (DNP) was established in 1935 following the London Convention of 1933 for the conservation of the African Flora and Fauna. The park covers about a total area of 8,900 sq km. Dinder national park is also acknowledged by UNESCO MaB Programme as a biosphere reserve site and as Ramsar site by the Ramsar secretariat. On the other side Alatish National park was established very recently in 2006 and covers a total area of 2,665 sq km. Relatively, the management and institutional capacity of Alatish National Park is far junior than that of Dinder.

The two national parks are found in the same ecosystem and they have many common features. Among others things, they:

- share common natural resources like Ayima and Gelegu River, which are tributary of the Nile River,
- have common wild animal which migrate daily and seasonally between the two parks,
- have the same vegetation cover, similar landscape, weather condition, rainfall
- have common park treats that needs cooperation to protect
- have common indigenous tribal groups (Gumuz) and

- interest of stakeholders on both sides

The features mentioned above are the major potentials which give confidence for the establishment of a Transboundary Park that will assist the attainment of the management objectives of both parks.

Even though this is the fact on the ground, the management bodies of both national parks have not yet started any formal communication and cooperation so far. Due to this there is a great loss of biodiversity in both parks especially in the common border areas where there is no well defined management activity from both side.

Hence, working for the establishment of Transboundary Parks between Alatish and Dinder would be a timely initiative and complementary to the ongoing initiatives such as the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and Ethio-Sudan border development commission. NBI strives for consolidating the cooperation and partnership among the riparian countries in a fair and equitable sharing of the Nile water. In addition to this, the boundaries of the nations are not yet clearly demarcated. Hence the cooperation between Ethiopia and Sudan in the proper management of the natural resources in the two national parks would have a positive impact for the intended mutual trust and peace building process.

Taking this in to account this study was conducted aiming at the establishment of TBPA between the two national parks. Accordingly the findings from the study indicated that there are immense potentials for the establishment and implementation of Transboundary Park Cooperation between Alatish and Dinder. In this regard agreements made between government of Ethiopia and Sudan, on wild life conservation, on political and security, trade and related matters, agriculture and health would be fertile ground for the intended initiative. Furthermore, the agreements made by the two countries have identified common threat of the national parks such as poaching, wild fire, grazing, fishing, uncontrolled collection of forest products, smuggling, drug trafficking. On top of the bilateral agreements made between the two countries, the international

environment related conventions and agreements to which both country are party like Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Agreement on the Conservation of African Eurasian Migratory Water Birds (AEWA), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Ramsar convention also serve as a potential bases for transboundary cooperation agreement and its implementation.

The study also revealed that the different economical standards of the two countries, existence of different administrative structure and institutional capacity of the two parks might be a challenge in the process of implementation of this initiative.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Preface

Protected areas safeguard biological and cultural diversity, help to improve the livelihoods of local communities, provide the homelands for many indigenous peoples and bring countless benefits to society in general (Sandwith,2001). However, as population increases at an alarming rate, protected areas will be negatively impacted, as the increased population requires increased energy demands. If not all, at least, in part, the energy demands are usually met by massive use of resources within protected areas (e.g., trees for fuel).

Clearly, distribution of natural resources and biodiversity does not respect international boundaries (Reader 1999). Ever since people began to create settlements, they made borders to protect their territory and property. Animals, rivers or mountain ranges do not recognize man made borders; they follow nature's design (EUROPARC, 2010). Natural resources have no intrinsic social, economic or political boundaries but they are very much surrounded and crisscrossed by competing governmental authority and the claims of diverse interest groups that hold differing values. International borders are political, not ecological, boundaries. As such, key ecological systems and components often occur in two or more nations and are subject to a range of often opposing management and land-use practices. Those Natural resources that are intersected by political boundaries are "transboundary" resources. Westing (1993a) estimates that nearly a third of the world's high-priority natural habitats with significant levels of biodiversity covers some part of the 220,000km of international boundaries between nation states.

The overlap of bioregions and their overlap with international boundaries create the need for transboundary protected areas management cooperation for the use of:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Cultural heritage and exchange
- International cooperation
- Maintenance of peace and security
- Promotion of sustainable development

- Regional economic integration
- Restitution of land tenure;
- Local economic development and
- Poverty alleviation

Griffin et al. (1999) note that transboundary natural resource management activities can legalize cross-border movement and renew cultural ties and traditions affected by international borders

2.2 Objectives of the study

2.2.1 General objective

The overarching aims of this work are: (a) to assess the potential and the opportunity for peace and cooperation that can be made through the Alatish and Dinder National Parks and (b) to support the importance of an initiative that the Ethio-Sudan Border Development Commission can establish for transboundary park management cooperation and implementation of such an initiative.

2.2.2 Specific objectives

- Identify common features of Alatish and Dinder National parks
- Study the major management threats on both Alatish and Dinder NPs and its effect on biodiversity of the area
- Identify the existing potentials and challenges to establish and implementing Transboundary Park Management Cooperation between Alatish and Dinder NPs.
- To make awareness about the concept of transboundary park for Alatish and Dinder NPs stakeholders

2.3 Significance of the study

There are many instances worldwide of long standing interaction and cooperation between two or more adjoining protected areas that are divided by international or sub-national boundaries. It has been recognized that such areas have symbolic value for peaceful co-operation between nations as well as practical benefits for coordinated or joint conservation management.

In this regard the principal benefits, as identified through the IUCN's "Park for peace" initiative include promoting international cooperation, enhancing environmental protection across ecosystems, facilitating more effective research, bringing economic benefits to local and national economies and ensuring better cross-border control of problems such as fire, pests, poaching and smuggling (Sandwith et.al. 2001).

Taking all these noble benefits of establishing Transboundary Parks into account the significance of conducting a research to investigate the potentials and challenges of establishing the same between Alatish and Dinder would be a timely initiative and complementary to ongoing initiatives such as the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and Ethio-Sudan border development commission. NBI strives for consolidating the cooperation and partnership among the riparian countries in a fair and equitable sharing of the Nile water. Hence the cooperation between Ethiopia and Sudan in the proper management of the natural resources in the two national parks would have a positive impact for the intended mutual trust and peace building process.

Dinder National park is one of the oldest NP of Sudan and it is one of two parks in the country designated as Biosphere Reserves. Dinder National park is also proposed as the first Ramsar and Biosphere Reserve site in Sudan. In contrast, Alatish National Park is a newly established national park in Ethiopia and has not yet developed its management strategy. Hence this kind of cooperation between the two parks would also serve a good cause for information and experience exchange for better management of the natural resources in the region.

Consequently conducting this particular research with full participation of concerned actors primarily opens the way and stimulates the process in both counterparts. Moreover it provides basic information on the existing potentials and impediments at different levels that would have impact on the realization of this initiative. The position of competent authorities in the two countries and the management officials of the parks are beneficiaries from the outcome of this intended research.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Background

Ecosystems often straddle political boundaries, and activities in one country or jurisdiction can significantly affect neighbors. Habitat fragmentation, blocked wildlife migrations, unnatural fire regimes and stabilized or reduced river flows disrupted ecosystem process (InWENT and GTZ). This threatens biodiversity and sustainable land use management. According to Van der et al. (2001) to overcome this problem and to ensure present and future generations can have sufficient access to natural resources and thereby secure their livelihoods; the management of water catchments, ecosystems, and migratory wildlife must become more compatible and participatory across local, national and international levels. He also under line, planning and management should take into account the ecological, socio-cultural, economic, political and institutional concerns of stakeholders across national boundaries-----

3.2 Definition

3.2.1 Protected area

3.2.2 Transboundary protected area

3.2.3 Park for Peace

3.3 Case study

3.3.1 Cordillera del Condor Transboundary Park for Peace

Ecuador and Peru established the Condor-Kutuku Park for Peace in 2004, after a decades' long dispute over access to the Amazon River culminating in armed clashes with up to 500 casualties in January 1995 (Braith aite, 2010, cited by Karina et al 2010). The Cordillera del Condor is a sparsely populated territory, a key element in the hydrological cycle linking the Andes with

the Amazon, and rich in biological resources, gold, oil, copper and other minerals (Karina et al 2010). -----

3.4 Study Area

Located in north-east Africa, Ethiopia and Sudan are neighboring countries. They share many common cultural and traditional features and a very long, about 1606 km long¹, common boundary. -----

3.5 Methods

The task of data collection begins after a research problem has been identified and research design/plan checked out. For research, there are two types of data, primary and secondary data. The primary data are those which are collected afresh for the first time, and thus original. The secondary data, on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by previous researchers (C.R. Kothar 2004). To carry out this research both primary and secondary data were essential and collected.

To identify common features of Alatish and Dinder national parks, natural resource data are necessary. Although this data is of vital importance for this research, it is vast and nearly impossible to collect primary data on natural resource. To fill this gap, reliable and adequate secondary data which is suitable for this research (C.R. Kothar 2004) was collected from Wildlife and Socioeconomic Status of Alatish National Park which studied by Amhara Regional State Parks Development and Protection Authority, from Alatish National Park Draft Management Plan and from Dinder National Park Management Plan.

¹ United Nation Office for the Cooperation of Humanitarian Affairs <http://ochaonline.un.org/sudan/Resources/CountryProfile/tabid/3012/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Questionnaire:- Structured questionnaires which contains closed questions (the 'yes' or 'no' types), open questions that invites respondents to give response freely (50% of the questioner) and questions which have fixed alternative was prepared with exactly the same and in the same order to all respondents (C.R. Kothar 2004). By considering low rate of return (C.R. Kothar 2004) 300 copies of the questionnaire was distributed to respondents in both hard copy hand to hand and soft copy through mail. Out of this 200 copies (150 in Ethiopia and 50 in Sudan) were collected back.

Interview: - To get freedom to ask supplementary questions or to omit certain questions in case of need non-structured interview method was used (C.R. Kothar 2004). The purpose of making interview is to increase the reliability of the data that collected as secondary data related to current situation. In addition interview 3 focus group discussions were carried out. The first discussion was in Khartoum with Wildlife Authority manager and researcher in Khartoum University. The second one was in Quara, Ethiopia with Scout leaders, experts and park managers. The third one is also Quara Ethiopia with Local Authorities.

In addition, the author's first hand experience and practical knowledge during the last 3-years of work at the site was also used.

4 RESULTS

5 DISCUSSION

6 CONCLUSION

As national boundaries are political not ecological, Ethio-Sudan political boundaries bisect the ecosystem and influence to manage under different administration as Alatish and Dinder NPs.

Alatish and Dinder NPs have similar landscape, habitat and wild animal, common natural resource and also have common threats. They share 75 Km long boundary. Along this border, they share natural resources and their wild animals move daily and seasonally one to the other. For equitable sharing from the common natural resource and for its proper management for sustainable development and peace building between nations by decreasing tension that can raised from water resource use computation; transboundary cooperation is recommended and can be effective

measure for Alatish and Dinder NPs proper biodiversity management for sustainable development. This transboundary conservation not only contributes to the conservation of the outstanding biological richness of the area but also helping to develop the environment of trust which is progressing by Ethio-Sudan border development commission.

There are a number of potential resources that can be bases for establishing transboundary park cooperation between Alatish and Dinder NPs and its effective implementation. There are also challenges for cooperation stratagem implementation.

Having common natural resource which inquires cooperation for equitable sharing, finding in one ecosystem and having the same habitats and wild animals that inquires cooperation for proper management; having common ethnic groups; having common treats which inquires cooperation to protect effectively;

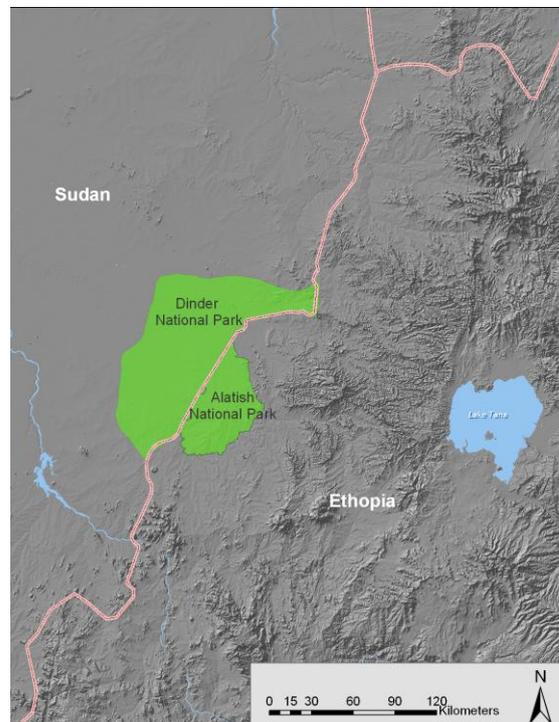


Figure 1: Map of Alatish-Dinder potential TBPA (by Hailu)

existing of National agreements on security, wildlife conservation, on agriculture, health and trade; environmental related international conventions and agreements signed by both countries; existing initiatives like Nile Basin and Ethio-Sudan border development commission; etc are potential resources for establishing and implementing transboundary park management cooperation between Alatish and Dinder NPs.

Living the same ethnic group, who can speak national languages of both countries, on both sides helps to that, there will not be language and cultural barrier in communication. This also reduces the costs of language translation during project management.

On the other hand, different economical standards of Ethiopia and Sudan, different organizational structure and different administrative strength of Alatish and Dinder national Park managements and natural resource use competition might be prospective challenges for effective implementation of transboundary park cooperation management.

Indigenous groups as well as other local communities have extended attachments, rich traditions in their relationship with the land and a direct dependence on the resources for their livelihoods in both parks. This causes human encroachment and become meanness of excessive biodiversity lose in each year. To reduce human encroachment and to increase the livelihood of local community, alternative income generation projects should plane and implemented. Common projects also necessary to manage the whole transboundary park properly and effectively. But economic difference of Ethiopia and Sudan might have great influence on common project management because of having different capacity to fund for that project. Also different structure and strength of the park managements might have effect on biodiversity law enforcement.

7 RECOMMENDATION

Alatish National Park should have a management plan. Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Authority should approve the draft management plan which prepared in 2008 by PaDPA.

Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority should work following IUCN criteria and register Alatish National Park in IUCN protected area category 2

Ethiopia and Sudan Wildlife Conservation Authority should assign focal persons each who can facilitate to sign the agreement and who can facilitate the increment levels of cooperation and coordinate transboundary park permanent cooperation after wards.

²There are six increasing levels of transboundary cooperation between pairs of adjoining protected areas, with each level including the positive attributes of the lower levels, suggesting that transboundary cooperation proceeds through stages. The six levels are

Level 0: No cooperation.

Level 1: Communication—Information-sharing.

Level 2: Consultation—Notification of actions.

Level 3: Collaboration—Active collaboration on several activities and frequent communication and meetings.

Level 4: Coordination of planning—Planning for the two protected areas as a single ecological unit, sometimes even planning jointly.

Level 5: Full cooperation—fully integrated, ecosystem-based planning, with common goals and joint decision-making by a transboundary committee, sometimes even involving joint management.

Right now Alatish and Dinder National Park is found at level 0. Transboundary Park Management Cooperation Coordinators can facilitate the progress of each cooperation levels. The first figures bellow shows cooperation progress from level 0 to 5 and the second figure shows recommended responsibilities of the focal person in each country.

² George Wright Society: <http://www.georgewright.org/33zbicz.pdf>

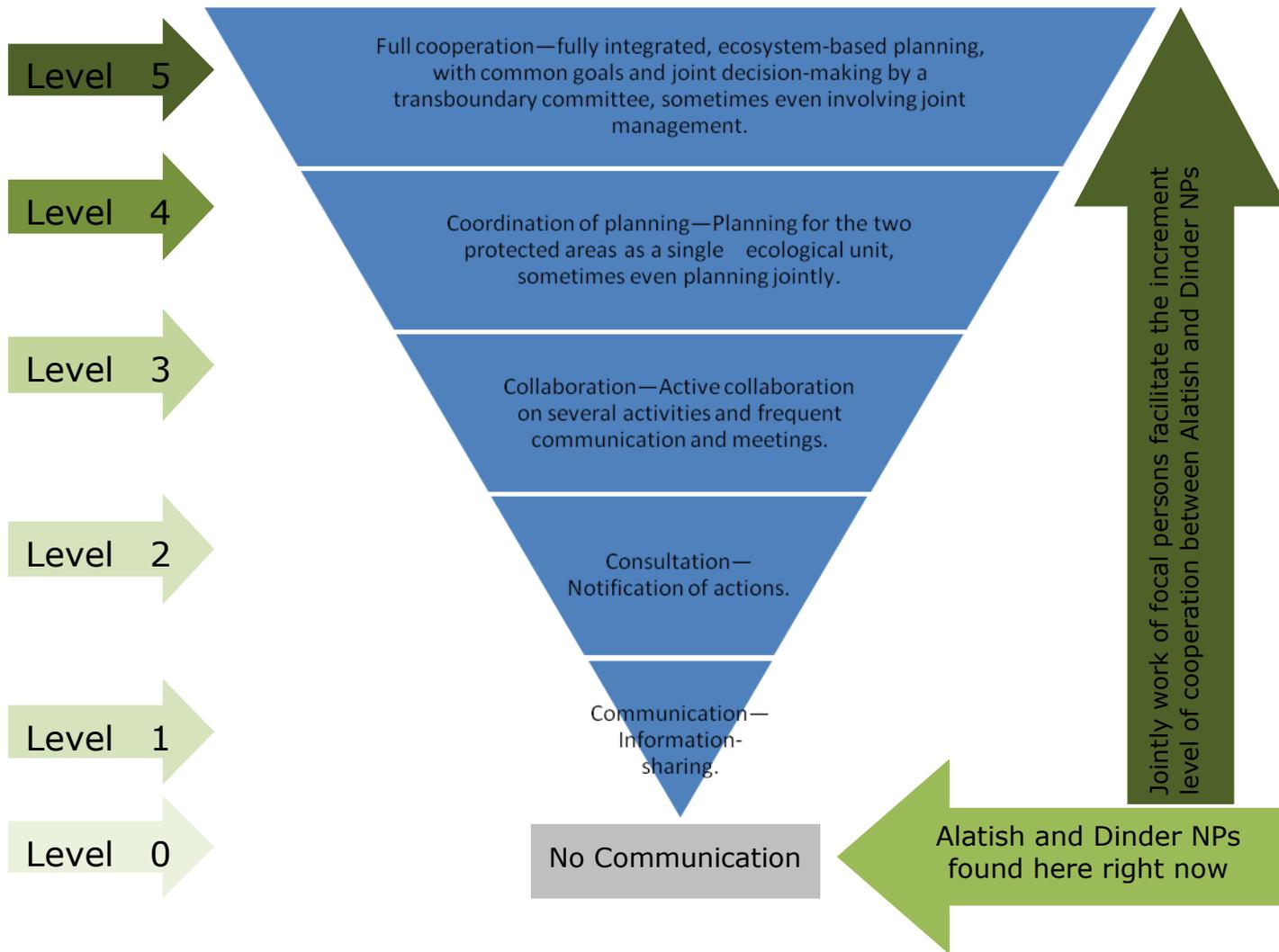


Figure 2: Six increasing levels of Transboundary Cooperation between pairs of adjoining protected areas and



Figure 3: Recommended diagram showing responsibilities of transboundary parks management coordinators in Alatish-Dinder Transboundary Park Cooperation (by Hailu)

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